

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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Update on Mold by Anna L. Stamm



Thanks go out to our members who responded to our informal survey on mold. So far, their reactions fall into three main categories:

1. Status Quo: Some members responded that mold is not an issue in their area (yet). Whether it is because they use green lumber and expect the changes in moisture content, or they are just more “accustomed to” moisture content fluctuations, these members are happy to say that mold has not been identified as unnatural and unacceptable.

2. Questions and Information Gathering: These members are being questioned about mold on lumber. They are seeking out information on how best to control mold growth. Some of these companies are considering adding steps to delay or prevent mold growth, such as buying wrapped lumber and increasing the coverage of stored lumber or trusses, but are aware of the increased cost of such measures.

3. Refusal and Remediation Demands: Unfortunately, members from Florida and the South to the Midwest, Southwest and the West Coast are being asked, or told, to take action to remediate mold on lumber. Likewise, deliveries are being refused in some areas due to visible mold on trusses. In the cases of which we are aware, the members are reaching resolution on a case-by-case basis.

What is a company to do? Even if mold is not a critical issue in your area, you should take steps to prepare for the possibility. If mold is a problem, then you must take steps to minimize your liability and expense.

1. Develop a company policy: We recommend you begin with the Truss Technology in Building sheet, “Facts Regarding Mold on Lumber.” This lays the groundwork that mold on lumber is a naturally occurring process and is a function of moisture content. Instruct your company employees in the basic facts so that they are prepared in the event of questions from customers. Educate yourselves before a crisis arises.

2. Educate your customers: If there is any possibility that the mold issue may start to grow in your area, take preventative measures! Start sending out the mold TTB in your jobsite delivery packages. You may also use the WTCA Letter to Builders and Contractors stating our position on mold on lumber. Do everything you can to explain the extent of your responsibility and the cost of taking action in situations beyond your control, such as after delivery. If possible, work in combination with your local WTCA Chapter to distribute this information. The Greater Chicago Chapter, for example, sent over 500 copies of the Mold TTB and Letter to Builders to the members of the local home builder associations. Call WTCA-National if you need help doing a similar mailing in your area.

3. Wage your battles wisely: Unfortunately, some manufacturers will have to fight to hang on to jobs and business relationships. Especially in these situations, tread with caution. If you agree to take costly measures to remediate mold on lumber in one place, it may become expected of you on all jobs. As you well know, these situations will have to be resolved on a case-by-case basis. Use the resources mentioned in step two above, the Mold TTB and Letter to Builders. Contact WTCA if you feel you need further assistance. If possible, work with your fellow manufacturers or the WTCA Chapter in your area to get out the facts about mold on lumber.

In each of these steps, education is the key. When the facts are out in the open, it is much harder to make false accusations and demand unrealistic concessions. By educating ourselves, and those with whom we do business, we will be in the best position to weather this latest challenge. Remember that by working together and presenting a united front on critical issues, we will achieve our strongest position in the marketplace.

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